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GILBERT STUART'S FIRST PORTRAIT OF
WASHINGTON FROM LIFE



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WASHINGTON FROM LIFE

THE VAUGHAN PICTURE PAINTED IN 1795

By

FREDERIC FAIRCHILD SHERMAN



NEW YORK
PRIVATELY PRINTED
MCMXXII

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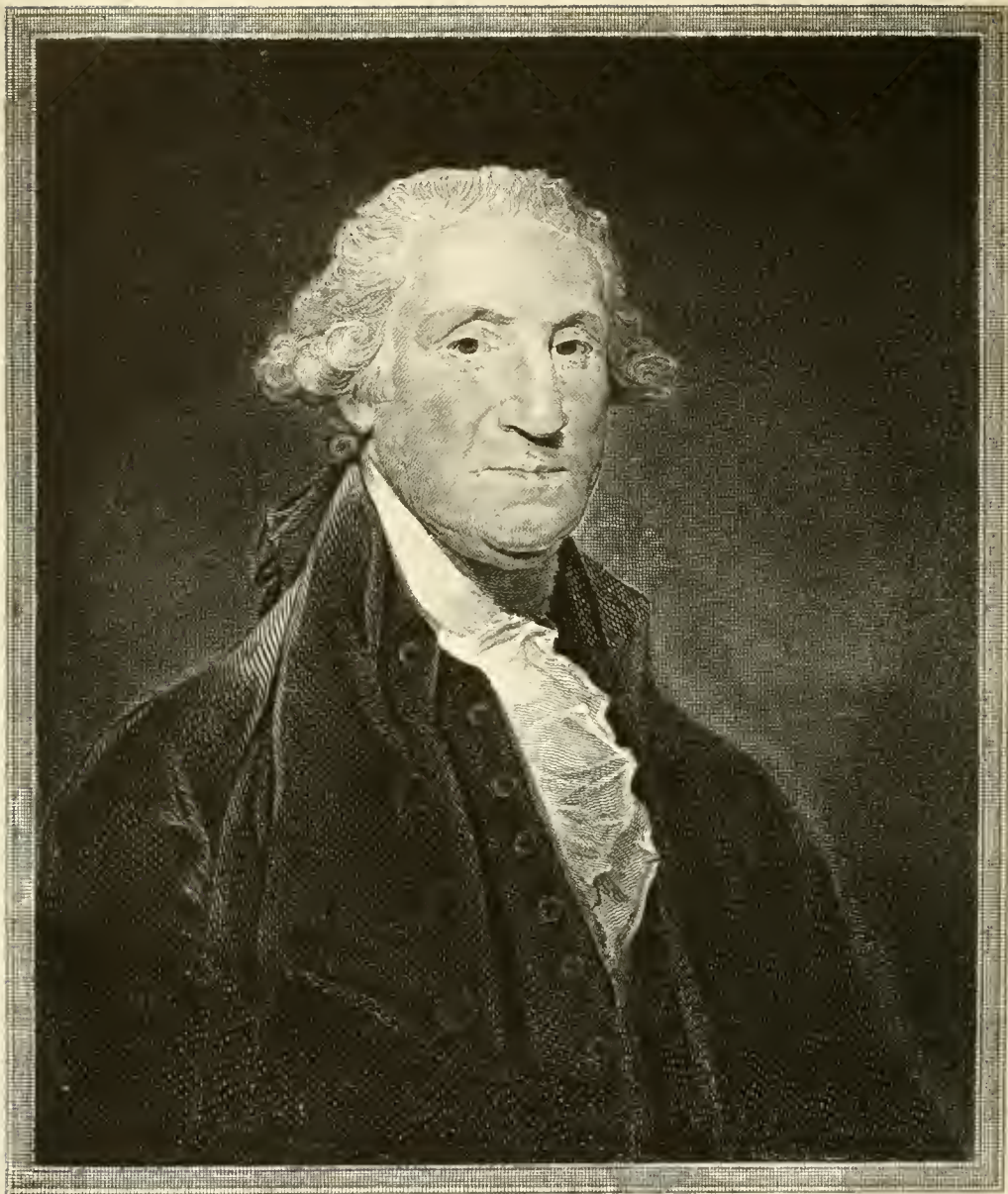
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GEORGE WASHINGTON

THE FIRST PAINTING MADE FROM LIFE IN 1795 BY GILBERT STUART
KNOWN AS THE VAUGHAN PORTRAIT. PURCHASED FROM THE HARRISON
COLLECTION IN 1912 BY THOMAS B. CLARKE



GEORGE WASHINGTON.

*Engraved by J. Hollman from a Picture painted by M. S. Smith in 1795
in the possession of Samuel Vaughan Esq.*

Printed by J. Hollman in 1800. The Daguerre No. 10.

GILBERT STUART'S FIRST PORTRAIT OF WASHINGTON FROM LIFE

THE VAUGHAN PICTURE PAINTED IN 1795



THE late Charles Henry Hart who was probably the pre-eminent authority upon the works of Gilbert Stuart, wrote in 1914 "The Vaughan-Stuart-Washington is the first right side of the face Stuart-Washington I ever saw and the deep impression it made upon me, now nearly forty years ago, as being the true portrayal of Washington by Gilbert Stuart has grown and strengthened with time until I believe in it so deeply and sincerely that when I think of 'Stuart; Washington' I think of the Vaughan picture and not of the familiar Athenæum head." And in the same letter he adds this interesting commentary upon Stuart's habits and methods of painting, "the treatment is so characteristic of his very best endeavors, it being painted so daintily in the flesh that he seems hardly to have touched the canvas with his brush, yet he did and just enough, and there is no painter who ever portrayed the human face who knew as well as he when his work should be left without another touch, and he left it, finished, or unfinished when he had reached that point. Of course it was only when he had the model before him that he could do this limning in this way."

In a letter dated New York, November 2nd, 1794, to his uncle Joseph Anthony of Philadelphia, Gilbert Stuart wrote "The object of my journey is only to secure a portrait of the President, and finish yours." The reference is unquestionably to the portrait commissioned by Samuel Vaughan of London, who was a friend of the President, and which Stuart painted from life in his studio at the Southeast corner of Fifth and Chestnut Streets, Philadelphia, in September, 1795. Rembrandt Peale who was painting Washington from life at the same time, wrote in 1859 after seeing the Vaughan portrait again, "It is the first original portrait painted by Stuart in 1795 at the same time that Washington sat to me."

The portrait was taken to London in the late fall of 1795 and there Thomas Halloway, the English engraver, made a plate from it which is dated Novr. 2d. 1796 and appeared in Lavater's *Physiognomy*, Vol. III, Part II, published in 1798. The lettering upon this plate, beside the name and the line giving the copyright date as above, reads "En-

graved by T. Holloway from a picture painted by Mr. Stuart in 1795 in the possession of Samuel Vaughan Esqr." No other engraved portrait of Washington by Gilbert Stuart bears so early a date. The painter knew of this engraving and he lived for more than thirty years after its publication but never offered any criticism whatever of it, though he vigorously denounced an engraving of one of his later full-length portraits of Washington made in England by Heath and published in 1800.

Samuel Vaughan for whom Stuart painted from life this first portrait of Washington, which shows the right side of the face, was born in 1720 and died in England in 1802 and bequeathed it to William Vaughan, who was born in 1752 and died in 1850. Some time thereafter Joseph Harrison the Philadelphia financier and art collector secured the painting from the executors of William Vaughan's estate and brought it to America. For many years it hung in his private gallery on Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia, and it was there that Rembrandt Peale renewed his acquaintance with the picture—which he made a copy of to illustrate his lectures on the portraits of Washington. This copy made by Peale, purchased at the public sale of Peale's pictures in 1862, now hangs in the gallery of portraits in the New York Public Library.

The Vaughan-Stuart-Washington was acquired by Mr. Thomas B. Clarke of New York at the sale of the pictures belonging to the Harrison estate after the death of Joseph Harrison's widow, in 1912. There are twelve other portraits, now undisputed, made by Gilbert Stuart from this original Vaughan picture, showing the right side of the President's face, all of which are about the same size, none in fact measuring more than thirty by twenty-five inches. The list is as follows, the names being those of the first and last known owners of the pictures:

- 1 Vaughan—Mr. Thomas B. Clarke, New York
- 2 Lee—Morris
- 3 Howard—Mrs. Willard Straight, New York
- 4 Tucker—Mrs. George L. Rives, New York
- 5 Sinclair—Hon. Andrew W. Mellon, Pittsburgh
- 6 Scott—Mr. Charles A. Munn, New York
- 7 Coleman—Mr. G. Dawson Coleman, Philadelphia
- 8 Hanson—Mr. Herbert L. Pratt, New York
- 9 Parker—Hart

- 10 Camperdown—Henry Clay Frick Collection, New York
- 11 Kitchen—Perry—Mr. Arthur Meeker, Chicago
- 12 Fisher—Mrs. George F. Tyler, Philadelphia
- 13 Gibbs—Channing—Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

The first eight following the Vaughan picture in the list closely resemble it and like it have plain backgrounds. In the last four, curtains were added by Stuart in both red, green and drab colors in the backgrounds. All are like the original Vaughan picture in that they have white linen jabots. The coats are all black save in the Camperdown picture where instead it is brown.



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